

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00

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R 111029Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7580

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA

CINCPAC

13 AIR FORCE CLARK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 16395

E.O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: THE REORDERING OF STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVIST PRIORITIES

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A) BANGKOK 15768; B) BANGKOK 15803

1. ON 7 OCTOBER 1974 REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SI NAKARINWIROT (WHICH IS COMPRISED OF EIGHT MAJOR COLLEGES OF EDUCATION) SUBMITTED A PETITION TO THE KING WHEREIN THEY REITERATED THE FOUR DEMANDS OF THE STUDENTS AND OTHER POLITICAL ACTIVISTS WHO HAD DEMONSTRATED SO VOCIFEROUSLY AGAINST THE CONSTITUTION AND THE NLA ON 18-23 SEPTEMBER 1974 (REFA). OF PARTICULAR INTEREST IS THE ORDERING OF THEIR PRIORITIES. FIRST PRIORITY NOW GOES TO THEIR DEMAND THAT THE PARLIAMENT MUST HAVE AUTHORITY
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TO APPROVE THE STATIONING OF FOREIGN TROOPS IN THAILAND.

(A UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE IS SECOND, THE 18 YEAR OLD VOTING AGE AND 23 YEAR OLD CANDIDACY AGE FOLLOW IN THAT ORDER). THE UNDER SECRETARY OF THE STATE UNIVERSITIES BUREAU RECENTLY TOLD US THAT THE STUDENTS HAD SHIFTED AWAY FROM STRESSING THE MINIMUM AGE LEVELS BECAUSE THEY DID NOT WANT TO APPEAR PAROCHIAL.

2. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE FOR DEMOCRACY GROUP AND THE NATIONAL STUDENTS CENTER OF THAILAND, FOLLOWING ON THE FAILURE OF THEIR DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE NLA, HAD STATED THAT THEY INTENDED TO REORDER THEIR PRIORITIES AND MAKE THE FOREIGN TROOP ISSUE FIRST PRIORITY. THE SI NAKARINWIROT STUDENTS HAVE TAKEN THE FIRST FORMAL PUBLIC STEP IN THIS DIRECTION. THE CURRENT OCTOBER 14 COMMEMORATION DISPLAYS AT THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ARE ALSO HEAVY ON ANTI-AMERICANISM. ACTIVIST SPEECHES THROUGHOUT THIS COMMEMORATION PERIOD MAY BE OCCASIONALLY STRONG IN THEIR ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT.

3. COMMENT: WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THE ISSUE OF AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE WILL BE A MAJOR ISSUE FOR STUDENT AND OTHER POLITICAL ACTIVISTS IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN (REF B). SINCE IT DOES NOT AT THIS WRITING APPEAR THAT THE CURRENT ASSEMBLY WILL AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO SUIT THE STUDENTS DEMAND ON THIS POINT, POLITICIANS WILL ALSO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE WITHIN THE GREATER CONTEXT OF THAI NATIONALISM. IT MAY BE THAT, HAVING FAILED TO GAIN MUCH SUPPORT ON INTERNAL DOMESTIC ISSUES, SOME OF THE MAJOR STUDENT GROUPS AND THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVIST ALLIES WILL TRY TO REUNITE STUDENTS AND REGAIN POPULAR SUPPORT ON THE BASIS OF NATIONALISM AND THE AMERICAN BOGEY MAN. PARTICULARLY APPEALING TARGETS WILL BE THE CIA AND B52 BOMBERS. IT IS TOO EARLY TO PREDICT WITH CERTAINTY THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF SUCH AN EFFORT. TO DATE STUDENT EFFORTS IN UPCOUNTRY AREAS TO ENCOURAGE POPULAR PROTEST AGAINST THE AMERICAN MILITARY PRESENCE HAVE HAD LITTLE SUCCESS. A STUDENT CAMPAIGN INDIRECTLY SUPPORTED BY VOTE SEEKING POLITICIANS TRYING TO CO-OPT AN ISSUE THAT MIGHT GAIN VOTES, HOWEVER, SEEMS MORE LIKELY TO ATTRACT SUPPORTERS.

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MASTERS

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